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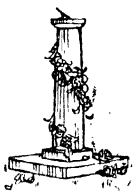


A CHRIST HEAD, by H. SCHMIECHEN.

THE RIDDLE OF LIFE SERIES—No. VI.

IS THEOSOPHY ANTI-CHRISTIAN ?

By G. HERBERT WHYTE.



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CHAPTER I.

IS THEOSOPHY ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

When the stream of thought which influenced the minds of this generation comes to be analysed dispassionately by the future historian, it is probable that he will give a prominent place to the current of Theosophical Teaching, which has been steadily permeating the thought of our day for a quarter of a century, gathering force and volume with every passing year. One of the best evidences of the increasing force of this influence is the number and the violence of the attacks which are made upon Theosophy and the Theosophical Society and its leaders. No Theosophist is seriously disturbed by attack, for he believes that that which is true is inherently invincible and only requires time in order to prevail; he believes that what is true in Theosophy is deathless and that all that can be struck away by any attack is the accretion of error, which clings like a parasite to every religion and to every philosophy—error springing, not from the sources of the religions, but from the limitations of their followers.

In England and in India much ink has lately been spilt in the endeavour to show that Theosophy is anti-Christian. It has been urged that (*a*) it leads people away from a sane mode of life into paths of darkness and of magic; (*b*) it seeks to lessen the greatness and the unutterable beauty of the life of the Founder of Christianity by exalting the Founders of the other Great Religions; (*c*) it interferes with the work of Christian missionaries in India; (*d*) it leads people away from the Church and the Faith into which they have been born, and which is the sweetest and the best for them.

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The purpose of this little book is to show that such fears are groundless, for there is nothing in Theosophy, when it is rightly understood, which warrants them. Mrs. Besant has put the Theosophical position in a phrase— "Theosophy asks you to live your religion, not to leave it." The Theosophical Society, numbering, as it does to-day, some twenty-two thousand members, is a meeting-place—perhaps the only one in the world—for followers of all the great religions, and its cardinal policy, maintained from its inception, is that differences of religious belief are to be respected, and that, as the minds of men are many, so must there be many ways by which God reveals Himself to them; none of these ways contains all possible truth, all of them contain a measure of the one Truth. The Theosophical Society works in India for the revival and the purification of Hinduism, in Ceylon it seeks to serve Buddhism, and in England its members would fain be numbered in the ranks of those who strive to understand better and to interpret more truly the glorious religion of the Christ.

Let us examine the criticisms indicated above. (a) Theosophy does not lead people away from a sane view of life. It sets before its students the picture of a world guided by Divine Wisdom and by a purpose which it is possible partially to understand, and it holds up the ideal of service, by mind or heart or hand, as being the highest aim of man. The power to serve grows as the individual life is developed and enriched; Theosophy gives the teaching whereby thought-power may be strengthened and controlled, the emotions may be purified and ennobled, and the maximum of physical well-being, dependent upon pure food, pure drink and a serene and stable temperament, may be attained. It has much to say in regard to the existence of other states of being, known vaguely as Purgatory, Hell and Heaven in Christian phrase, but the man who would study the invisible worlds must first be master of the visible. So far from leading its

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students into the murky paths of magic, Theosophy warns them, in unmistakable terms, of the dangers which dog the footsteps of the dabbler in the many forms of pseudo-occultism now so widely advertised and ranging through all varieties of fortune-telling to the specious "methods of success" in the acquisition of money, which turn upon the selfish cultivation of thought power and personal magnetism in order to get the better of other people.

(b) Theosophy does not seek to lessen the dignity of the Master. Rather does it seek to show unsuspected splendour and greatness in His Name. "Lord of *all* the religions of the world" is how the Theosophist regards Him. Picture a devout Roman Catholic kneeling before a shrine where Virgin and Child are represented, and lighting a votive candle; or a Quaker, wrapt in the tense silence of prayer; or a Mohammedan, kneeling on the open ground and turning in prayer to Mecca; or a Buddhist offering a flower before a statue of the Buddha, with joined palms raised to his forehead; and ask yourself whether, within the difference of outward act, there is not the same burning flame of devotion in each? The Theosophist sees in the figure of the Christ the Lover of men, in Whom all these streams of devotion and of worship are united and from Whom comes a response to each according to its needs. To Him the form is nothing and the Faith is all. And just as surely as the prayer of Faith reaches Him, whether the lips that frame it be of East or of West, or of this creed or of that, so also does the formal and the selfish prayer ever fail to reach His ears. The Theosophist remembers how He said: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." (John x., 16).

(c) Theosophy does not interfere directly with the work of missionaries in India or anywhere else. But Theosophists, studying all religions and finding the same great truths as to life, death and conduct enshrined in each, strive to work for each religion rather than for one alone, and judging that

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Hinduism is, on the whole, best suited to Hindus, they would strengthen and purify that faith rather than import an alien faith into India. By all means let us send missionaries to India, men of learning and culture, but let them show the Spirit of the Christ as being present in the sacred scriptures of Hinduism, where most surely it may be found. Then indeed will their efforts be blessed and succeed beyond their expectations. That some idea of this sort is moving in the minds of progressive Christian missionaries is evidenced by a new work by the Rev. Bernard Lucas, entitled "Our Task in India: Shall we Proselytise Hindus or Evangelise India?" Mr. Lucas refers to the suspicions now being harboured by many as to the necessity, and doubts as to the wisdom of Indian missionary enterprise in its present form.

(d) Theosophy does not lead people away from Christianity, but, on the contrary, has, in many instances, aroused in its students a deeper appreciation of their Faith than they possessed before they took up its study, and in a large number of cases it has brought back to Christianity those who had forsaken the Christian Faith on account of the narrow and irrational manner in which it had been presented to them. Recently a member of the Theosophical Society, himself a clergyman of the Church of England, sought to test the truth of this statement in a very direct fashion. He asked members of the Society to communicate with him who had—as the result of Theosophical study—

- (a) Returned to Christianity after having practically abandoned it;
- (b) Come, without having fully abandoned it, to a fuller and more vital apprehension of the meaning of its doctrines;
- (c) Come to such an apprehension from original Agnosticism;

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- (d) As members of the Church of England, come to a strong conviction of the power and reality of the Sacraments of the Church.

The English membership of the Society is about two thousand, and within three weeks of the request, which was printed in the official journal of the Society in England, no less than two hundred and twenty-three letters were received. These letters, the clergyman in question states, "form a 'most important mass of testimony to the value 'of Theosophy, not only in reconciling students of 'it intellectually to their religion, but in giving 'help for daily life, in solving the darkest problems 'of existence, in removing the fear of death, in 'restoring faith, peace and hope, and in quickening 'a sense of the Presence of God and of the great- 'ness, nearness and living reality here and now of 'the Christ Himself. . . . So striking is the 'mass of testimony collected, so moving and ap- 'pealing are the life stories told by many of my 'correspondents, stories of estrangement from 'religion as commonly presented, of years of doubt 'and unrest ended by the coming of Theosophy as 'the light-bringer, of return in all cases to sym- 'pathy with Christianity and in a majority to 'communicating membership of the Church; that 'I have decided to publish, as soon as possible, a 'volume containing a large selection from the 'statements I have received."

It would be difficult to devise a more satisfactory way of testing the question as to whether Theosophy is anti-Christian or not. This testimony alone should suffice to set at rest the fears of those who think that it is and so cast suspicious glances upon it.

In the following chapters I propose to glance briefly at some of the teachings of Theosophy with the view of showing that they are in no instance foreign to the spirit or the Scriptures of Christianity.

CHAPTER II. THE NATURE OF MAN.

It will be convenient to begin by considering the nature of man as conceived by Christianity and by Theosophy.

Many Christians would maintain that man consisted of body and soul; that the soul came from God, "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Numbers xvi., 22), and that when a child was born there entered in this soul, which gradually acquired character and intelligence, growing side by side with the growth of the body. Finally, at the death of the body, the soul "entered into eternity," there to embark upon a protracted career of bliss or of misery according to the use it had made of its brief voyage through life.

Certain difficulties confront the thoughtful student in face of a conception like this. Is there any law operating by which these souls are sent to bodies, or is all shrouded in mystery and the result of chance or caprice? By some it is urged that the soul is inherently pure, but that environment and heredity may influence it and bring about its downfall. It may fairly be asked, however, why should a pure, virgin soul be sent to birth in the tainted body of a child born of profligate and criminal parents in a slum? Or in the body of a primitive Australian black, whose power of brain is so little developed that the memory of events of to-day is hardly carried to to-morrow? What opportunity has the soul of the black, equally pure and virgin with the soul which inspired Newman or Gladstone, of gaining the rich human experience for which surely it was sent into the world? Why,

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again, should a soul be sent to animate a body which lives only for a few brief months or years? It is sometimes said, in reply to such questions, that it will all be adjusted in the life to come. This may be so, but it does not seem to bring us any nearer to a rational view as to why these things are so in the life here, and while we have everywhere such ample evidence, in the natural world, of exquisite design and purpose, it seems unreasonable to exclude human life on earth from the scope of the law and order which we perceive everywhere else.

Another and more philosophical type of Christian thought would explain that the nature of man was three-fold, and consisted of spirit, soul and body. "The dividing asunder of soul and spirit" is spoken of (Hebrews iv., 12).

Theosophy endorses this threefold division of the nature of man into body, soul and spirit, but it adds certain other facts which are apt to be lost sight of in modern Christian thought, although men like Sir Oliver Lodge (see his *Man and the Universe*) are beginning to show their supreme importance.

Theosophy explains that the spirit in man is the Christ nature in him—that pure breath of the spirit which dwells in every human heart. This is the only immortal element in man. While it is present in every human being its degree of manifestation varies; it is hardly perceptible in a primitive savage; it shows occasional gleams in the civilised man; it shines in undimmed glory in the Christ. It is the true basis of human brotherhood, which rests, as rests all brotherhood, not upon equality, but upon the sharing of a common life. Theosophy also teaches that the body is but a temporary manifestation, and that the soul stands midway between body and spirit.

The additional factors of which Theosophy takes cognisance are these.

We have to extend our conceptions of the word matter and to realize that in our world there are

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many orders of matter finer than those with which we normally can deal in the laboratory. We are familiar with the fact that our bodies are built up of inter-penetrating types of matter ; the blood permeates everywhere throughout the system, as can readily be demonstrated by a pin-prick ; the air inter-penetrates both the solids and the liquids. In fact, if it were possible to eliminate suddenly all the solid particles from the body, there would still be left a replica of it in liquids. The same thing is true of the body of air in which we dwell unsuspectingly. It is well-known that ether, in turn, inter-penetrates all those three denser orders of matter—solid, liquid and gaseous ; the use of anæsthetics depends for its success upon the power which certain drugs possess of expelling locally, as in the case of ether-injection, or very largely, as in the case of chloroform for a severe operation, the nervous ether upon which the physical manifestation of consciousness depends.

There is, therefore, nothing strange in the notion that we possess bodies of subtler matter which form a garment for the soul, through which our thoughts and emotions play, and in which we shall live when death takes away the body of flesh. 'There is a very weighty school of contemporary Protestant theologians . . . who . . . affirm 'that we have good grounds for believing in the 'existence of a non-atomic enswathement of the 'soul, ethereal, intangible, invisible, which at death 'departs with it from the muddy vesture of decay 'and constitutes the resurrection body.' (*Ancient Religion and Modern Thought*, p. 331, by W. S. Lilly). The phenomena of thought transference, of magnetic healing and of mesmerism are dependent upon the manipulation by the human will of these finer types of matter. The "natural body" to which St. Paul refers is much more complex than we usually suppose. It should be translated rather as "soul-body" or "psychic-body" in contradistinction to the "spiritual body." "It is sown a

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soul-body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a soul-body there is also a spiritual body." (1 Cor. xv., 44).

Theosophy boldly affirms that we now possess, and are constantly using, these subtler, invisible bodies, and thereby rationalizes the ideas of the Resurrection and of the life to come.

Popular thought upon these points is apt to be extraordinarily confused. Many believe in Purgatory and Hell and Heaven, but few stop to consider in what kind of body the soul dwells in those other conditions. If the soul persists at all, as Christians believe and as psychical research is beginning to demonstrate, then its memory, its loves and its hates, in short its personality, must have some material medium for expression, however rare that medium may be. "Streets of pure gold" and "doors of pearl" are but poetic means of suggesting the rarity and the beauty of those subtler worlds of matter. A further and impossible complication is introduced sometimes in the popular conception by the belief that, at a given moment, possibly some hundreds of years after the body has been laid to moulder in a grave, or has been consumed cleanly by fire, and after its particles have been scattered to the four quarters of the earth, this *same* physical body will be raised up again.

The body which we now wear is not raised again. Commonsense and science alike demonstrate the folly of such a notion. It returns to the elements whence it came, dust to dust. The soul rises after death in the "soul-body," which it has been using all the time. The power to think and the power to feel do not have their roots in the brain, but in this "soul-body." The power to love, the power to know and the power to will, the deepest and the holiest powers in man do not spring from the grey matter of the brain, but have their roots in the "spiritual body." "It is sown a soul-body, it is raised a spiritual body." The soul-body is, as it were, a seed sown in the body of flesh.

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As the flesh is purified and ennobled the soul-body develops, and as the soul-body grows and surrenders its life to the spirit the exquisite flower of the Christ-nature will come to bloom. In this way Theosophy understands the rare thought of the Apostle, and in this way the resurrection in the subtler bodies takes place in a natural and understandable fashion at the close of every life.

Theosophy teaches that there is a resurrection in a new physical body, when the soul returns again to birth in obedience to the great law of re-incarnation, but to that subject we will address ourselves in the next chapter.

Does Theosophy attach no importance to the physical resurrection of the Christ? By no means. The whole of the Christ life is supremely significant. In Him we have the type of the perfect man in whom spirit, soul and body are all perfectly developed. He is able to work on all the planes of nature, to work among men, to ascend into Heaven, to descend into Hell, and all in full consciousness; not only are His spiritual body and His soul-body perfectly developed, but also that wonderful body by which He comes into contact, when He so chooses, with our physical world. This is His resurrection body, and such a body as this will be used by every human being when they reach unto the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," but not until then. This is the level of the Master, and happily there are some who have obeyed the Christ's command and have attained it.

This view of man's nature rationalizes also our conceptions regarding the life after death. The judgment which awaits each soul is a judgment of his own making. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi., 7). A soul-body, attuned through life to the gratification of the desires of the flesh, cannot but be an uncomfortable possession in the next world, just as it is in this—rather more so, in fact. A drunkard, torn with the desire for drink, experiencing all the

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psychic side of the craving (which is far greater than the purely physical), but without any means of gratifying his longing, is experiencing hell indeed; fire and brimstone are mere stage properties in comparison. A man who has hardened his heart against his fellows will know what isolation really means when death removes him from their physical companionship, and lifts him into a world which he can only sense through the ossified soul-body he has built. The anguish wrought by cruelty to man or beast, to which the individual has gradually steeled himself in the earth-life, returns upon him in waves of woe and fear in the subtler world of the soul. He learns what suffering means, if perchance he had forgotten it here below. But none of these conditions are eternal and none are punitive. They are the inevitable working out of causes set in motion here, and the conditions only last while their causes endure. Theosophy, in harmony with the best Christian thought, denies utterly the blasphemy of an eternal Hell.

On the other hand, a soul-body, attuned through life to the vibrations of noble thoughts and pure, unselfish emotions, is a centre of blessing in this world and will swiftly raise its possessor to its appropriate level in the next, *i.e.*, the Heaven-world. Heaven is in the mind and the heart of man. To love is to touch heaven; to love always is to dwell there. To think a noble thought, to appreciate a fine writer or a lovely work of art is to open a window into paradise; to make a habit of high thought is to keep that window always wide. A man living, after "death," in a noble and refined soul-body will find himself attuned to the harmonies of Heaven; he has been attuning himself thereto all the time, although the ears of the flesh are dull and its eyes are dim. But in Heaven he will be nearer to the infinite beauty of the Mind of God, and glimpses of the divine world will fill his soul with ecstasy and enrich his nature with

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wisdom and with truth.

"There is a spiritual body." What of it? Elsewhere the Apostle says of it that "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v., 1).

Note the phrases "not made with hands" and "eternal in the heavens." The soul-body is "made with hands"; it is wrought by the constantly-changing life of man. It is not eternal. It may be "raised a spiritual body." It is the seed whence the spiritual body may flower. This spiritual body has been from all time, it is ours now, it is the wedding garment, yet we do not consciously wear it, for the most part. We touch here, in all reverence, the deepest part of our subject, the spirit in man, the "Christ in you" to which St. Paul so often refers, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv., 10). The spirit in man is the Christ in him, that manifestation of the divine which was perfect in Jesus Christ, but which is gradually unveiling itself in every human soul. It has its own habitation in the eternal, above the turmoil of the worlds, "an house not made with hands." Who shall dwell in this house of the spirit? "He that overcometh." He that subdues the lower and raises it to the higher "the same shall be clothed in white raiment," the white raiment of the spiritual body. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God." "I will give him to eat of the tree of life." "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna" (Rev. ii.).

But we who have not yet overcome, the vast multitudes of our humanity, we shall come back to earth, to gain new power and new wisdom, to search afresh for the pearl of great price. In due time shall we become pillars in the temple of God and go no more out, but that time is not yet for us.

Theosophy teaches that the whole purpose of

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human evolution is the gradual unfolding of the "Christ in you," the possessor of the spiritual body. Only when a man has learnt to love unselfishly and to think nobly and to serve his fellows can the Christ in him quicken to the birth; we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." "Nature is awaiting with eager expectation the appearing of God's sons" (Rom. viii., 19). The Christ spirit is latent in even the most degraded member of our humanity; it is to become manifest in him and in all "till we all come . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv., 13).

Theosophy accepts all this quite literally; the Christ is the first-fruits of the mighty harvest of humanity, not different in kind, but in degree. But Theosophy faces the facts of life squarely, and sees that numbers of our humanity are not within measurable distance of the "fulness of the stature of Christ"; and by its splendid conception of re-birth it opens up a way for all.

CHAPTER III.

RE-INCARNATION AS A CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

There are three possible views with regard to the history of the soul of man, and three only.

The first view is that there is no soul, apart from the body. This was the view held by many of the foremost scientific thinkers of thirty years ago, and it is still held by many scientific students to-day. It was implied by Tyndall's famous declaration that he "saw in matter the promise and the potency of all forms of life"; it was traversed by Crookes in his no less famous reversal of this statement; he "saw in life the promise and the potency of all forms of matter." It would be difficult to find a more suggestive indication of the change which has taken place in scientific thought.

The second view is that of special creation, *i.e.*, that for every human body born alive into the world a soul is specially created by the Almighty. This, of course, is the view held by the vast majority of Christians, who make no distinction between soul and spirit, and ignore St. Paul's reference, previously quoted, to the body of the spirit—the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The third view is that the soul of man, like all else in nature, is of gradual growth and that the character and the abilities which we bring with us into the world, and which gradually express themselves through the new and plastic body, influenced very greatly by our surroundings, are the results of our labours in previous human existences. I hope to show that this view is rational, and that it is not foreign to Christianity.

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The word evolution has become part of the familiar and accepted thought of our times within a space of little over half a century ; reincarnation bids fair to have a like experience, for it is the companion doctrine to evolution. The laws of evolution have so far been applied to matter ; there is no reason why they should not be applied, as Theosophy applies them, to life.

From primitive, one-celled creatures all the more complex forms have been developed, and, in fact, the human body, in its pre-natal life, beginning with a single germ cell, runs swiftly through the stages of development through which it passed in remote ages, resembling first a mineral, then a vegetable and then taking various animal shapes until it emerges in the familiar human form. Scientific men are enquiring what is this guiding and compelling force behind evolution, whose purpose is so clear and whose steps are turned so unfalteringly forwards. In a recent number of the *Hibbert Journal* (January, 1913), there appeared an article by Professor Overstreet, in which he sought to show how the conception of God was gradually changing from that of an extra-cosmic judge to that of an immanent presence. He points out how :

The genetic sciences are everywhere convincing us that there is no fundamental break in continuity between the lower animals and man, that, as Forel states it : 'All the properties of the human mind may be derived from the properties of the animal mind,' and that therefore 'the doctrine of evolution is quite as valid in the province of psychology as it is in all the other provinces of organic life.' There remain two great steps still to be taken. Below the animal is the plant ; below the plant is the so-called inorganic." He then proceeds to point out that recent research is demonstrating the presence of psychical life in both plant and inorganic forms. "We have rid ourselves," he says, "of the notion of a difference in kind between the human and the

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lower animal; we are increasingly doing so between the animal and the plant," while "the inorganic may be at or near the lower limit of variation. . . . If this should prove to be true then the inorganic is fundamentally the same in kind as the most advanced forms of life." He concludes that the dominant trend of scientific endeavour is the effort "to break down all barriers, to link all the orders of the world together in an essential oneness of quality and process."

Professor Overstreet continues that the new conception of God is "the figure of myriad lives, and yet of one vast group life, in ceaseless activity. . . . the God that, in every act and intention, *we, with all our countless fellows, are realizing* . . . a God, in short, that *is* the world in the spiritual unity of its mass-life."

This is a fine statement of the Theosophical conception of the divine incarnation, the Christ as God, of which we shall speak in our next chapter. The life of God is everywhere present, ensouling every form; the toil and sweat of evolution are truly His toil and sweat, and the glorious consummation-to-be will be His consummation as well as ours, for He shall be all in all. As was said by an old Persian poet, Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (*The Mesnavi iv.*).

"I died from the mineral and became a plant.

I died from the plant and re-appeared in an animal.

I died from the animal and became a man.

Wherefore then should I fear? When did I grow less by dying?

Next time I shall die from the man,

That I may grow the wings of the angel."

It is this evolving life which carries on from an outworn form the experience which it has gained. Animals and plants adapt themselves slowly to changes in their environments; at death the memory of these slight adaptations passes inwards to the race-life whence they come, which is thereby

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modified and enriched. It flows outwards into new forms, which it strives to impress with its added experience; at first hardly any impression is made, but if the same conditions prevail in the outer world the same modifications are stimulated afresh and by degrees a new type is firmly established, both in the form which perishes, save for the germ cells, and in the life which endures. Here we have a rational view of evolution, guided in very truth by God Himself, for it is His life which is evolving; rational—yet wonderful and mysterious, for He is not limited by His world, but remains eternally perfect and transcendent above it.

Here also we have a rational explanation of the phenomena of instinct. The chick just out of the egg cowers when a hawk flies over the farm-yard and the duckling goes fearlessly into the water, because that tiny portion of the race-life which is incarnate in each of these has done so many times before. The beaver building his dam, the bee its cell, the bird its nest, are skilful with the stored-up skill of myriads of their species.

Human life also is rationalized by this conception. Between the members of our human family vast differences are to be found in body, in richness and variety of emotion, and in power and clearness of thought. Put side by side a savage of Australia and a civilized European. The Australian's body is coarser, his nervous system is less sensitive; a serious wound disturbs him but slightly, when the same injury would perhaps kill the European through nervous shock. The emotions of the savage are few and violent, and are concerned chiefly with questions of nutrition, self-preservation and reproduction. Where the European is lost in ecstasy at a beautiful sunset the savage merely observes a red sky. His mind is the tool of his wants. He is a baby in the school of life. If life be pictured as a scale and all its varied possibilities of noble thought and lofty feeling be taken as the notes of that scale, then we may say that the

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savage, in his life, has hardly sounded a single note, whereas the civilized man vibrates to many. It is only the Christ and such as He who can touch the full keyboard in melody and harmony. The difference between the savage and the civilized is one of growth, and the difference between the civilized man and the Christ is also one of growth and not of kind.

"Be ye perfect," said the Christ. An idle command if spoken to poor, stumbling humanity with but a few years to live, but a command and a glorious promise if spoken to men with time in which to grow and of whom it was said that "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. iii., 16). This further unfolding of the "Christ in you" was the subject of the solemn prayer of the Apostle, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv., 19). The Holy Child is born in the soul, "the hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter iii., 4). "Joint heirs with Christ" are we, but only by the growth of many lives can we claim our birthright and attain to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Theosophy throws new and brilliant light upon these splendid prophecies and enables us to accept them in all the glad beauty of their full meaning and not in some watered-down application. For the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ is the measure of a perfect life lived in our world and among men, wearing our flesh and sharing our sorrows and temptations, yet rising supreme above them, and not a stature to be acquired in the life beyond the physical, away from the temptations and the difficulties whereby our strength and our stature grow. The stature of the Christ is not acquired amidst the joys of heaven, but in the stress of this mortal life.

Let us now turn to the further question as to whether this conception of reincarnation is foreign to Christianity.

It is perhaps not unfair to remark that many

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of the beliefs and discoveries of our scientific age are not found clearly expressed in the Christian scriptures. Evolution, as we now understand it and know it to be fact, is not explained in the New Testament. Darwin and Wallace were preached at from many Christian pulpits ere their discovery was quietly adopted by the Church, and the same will be true of reincarnation, because it adds to, and does not take away from, the meaning and purpose of the Master's life; all that does this is worthy of a place in His faith. Reincarnation is referred to quite explicitly by the Christ Himself upon two occasions.

At the end of the Old Testament (Malachi iv., 5) it is written: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." When John the Baptist, who, like Elijah, was a man ascetic by training, but fiery of nature, prophesied regarding Jesus "His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then say the Scribes that Elias must come first?' And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Elias truly shall come and restore all things. But I say unto you that Elias is come already and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them.' Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matthew xvii., 10-13).

And again, "For all the law and the prophets prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come" (Matthew xi., 13, 14).

Here we have twice repeated by the Christ a very clear identification of the former life of the Baptist. Of all possible interpretations of these verses the most direct is the most satisfactory, i.e., that the Master meant just what He said, "This is Elias."

The other occasion upon which the question of re-birth came up was when the disciples asked Him

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the famous question regarding the man blind from birth : " Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? "

Properly to appreciate this question we must realize that the idea of re-birth was widely held among the Jews at the time of Christ. Josephus reproached the Pharisees for conceding the transmigration of souls to the worthy alone. " All souls are subject to transmigration " is said in the Zohar. The Master does not admit that in the particular case before Him the cause of the blindness lay in a former life, for He assigns another and mystical reason, " that the works of God may be manifest in him," but surely, had he deemed that the conception of re-birth, which was clearly in the minds of His disciples, was erroneous in itself He would have stated so, as He did elsewhere when they needed correction.

Again in John xiv., verse 2, occurs a significant phrase : " In my Father's house are many halting-places." The word translated mansions is a word used for the rest-houses along the roads of the empire. This is a very suggestive reference to the many rests which the human soul takes in the Father's house between those lives of effort on earth in which its stature is growing. Note the significant words with which the Master continues : " If it were not so I would have told you." The idea of re-birth and more accurate translation reveal the true meaning of this passage.

Pre-existence and re-birth are referred to by many of the Christian Fathers, and were cardinal doctrines among the Gnostics, who represented for several centuries the purer stream of the spiritual and philosophical teaching of the Christ. Witness the *Pistis Sophia* on this point.

It was not until the year 543 A.D., and then at a local synod held at Constantinople and *not* by the fifth General Council of Constantinople, as was for long believed, that this teaching was ruled out of orthodox Christianity. It persisted, however, and

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may be found among many of the mystical sects which kept the fire of knowledge burning through the dark ages.

In a remarkable book entitled "Reincarnation, a Study of Forgotten Truth," the writer, E. D. Walker, points out how reincarnation has been held by the greatest thinkers of our race. Setting aside Hinduism and Buddhism (which, of course, number half the human family in their folds), where reincarnation is an accepted belief, we find, says Walker, that Plato taught it. "Soul is older than body," he says. "Souls are continually born over again from Hades into this life." It was taught by the Neo Platonists; Cæsar found it among the Gauls; the Manichæans and the Cathari passed it on in the early Christian days from the Gnostics, whose knowledge came from the very fount of Christendom; in the seventeenth century Henry More and other Cambridge Platonists caught up this conception; Giordano Bruno taught it; Virgil sang it; "Metempsychosis is the only system of immortality that philosophy can hearken to," said Hume; Schopenhauer, Lessing, Hegel, Leibnitz have advocated it; Huxley saw nothing against it and much to support it. "Other heights in other lives," said Browning; while Tennyson speculates upon the possibilities of the past that lie behind him, whether he had lapsed from some nobler race "or if through lower lives I came" (see *The Two Voices*). Maeterlinck has described the idea of rebirth thus: "There never was a more beautiful, a juster, a purer, a more moral, fruitful and consoling, nor, to a certain point, a more probable creed" (*Our Eternity*, page 156); while Professor J. Ellis McTaggart recently wrote "that the belief in human pre-existence is a more probable doctrine than any other form of the belief in immortality." He points out that most men and women are so far from perfection that it is impossible that they can go straight to a perfect Heaven. The theory, he says, that there is one short life, bounded by birth

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and death, and then "one indefinitely long life, not divided by birth and death at all" has "no analogy in nature, and such a change from the order of our present experience seems unjustifiable." (Address to the Synthetic Society in January, 1904).

This splendid conception is coming steadily back into Western thought ; it is for Christians to realize how it illuminates life and makes rational the burning hope of the Apostle that "Christ be formed in you," a hope so ludicrously impossible and meaningless if set before the dejected mass of our slum population, drink-sodden and sin-stained, yet far more sinned against than sinning. It is a faith for the lover of men, who sees that just as the body and brain require sun and air and freedom in order to grow, so does the "Christ in you" require pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds ere it can manifest. I am not losing sight of the fact, borne testimony to by the Christian worker, that the Christ-nature does shine out suddenly in the most unlikely surroundings, and that the slums, even more than the seats of "culture," are starred with examples of the Christ-life at work, lovely instances of heroism, faith, patriotism and loving service of others ; but these are not the rule. It is true in principle and in experience that the Christ nature does not shine out in the primitive savage or in the drunken hooligan, and we should no more expect it to do so than we should expect to look at an egg and hear it crow, and to see an oak tree suddenly arise full-grown from an acorn.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRIST AS GOD.

Few names are spoken as often as that of Christ; few names connote such various ideas in the minds of those who use them. For some the name of Christ only calls to their minds the picture of a perfect life lived centuries ago in Palestine; for many others, and these the more thoughtful, complex ideas regarding the Incarnation and the Second Person of the Trinity and the mystery of the Cross are aroused by this name. All these are united, however, in their profound love and devotion for the figure round which clusters all that is best and holiest in Christendom.

Theosophy yields to none in the depth of the reverence which it pays to the Christ; and if there should be any word in this small book which jars upon a fellow Christian reading these lines I would have him realize that differences of opinion go no deeper than mental conceptions, and that there is room for infinite variety of these side by side with the most complete unanimity in the deeper depths of human nature, where love, devotion and intuition have their roots.

A hundred years ago few would have challenged as the narration of an historical fact the statement that nineteen hundred years ago Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, came down upon earth, was born as a child, lived as a man and died as a man upon the cross for the sins of his fellows and of generations yet unborn. Since then, however, many writers, amongst them many who are thoughtful and in earnest, have challenged this simple statement. They have pointed to discrepancies of a serious character in the different New Testament narratives, difficult of explanation.

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It has been argued with much cogency (*vide The Gospels and the Gospel* by G. R. S. Mead) that the documents which we now possess, whatever they may have been based upon, were not composed until early in the second century A.D., and therefore are not the accounts of eye-witnesses. Men like J. M. Robertson, Dr. K. C. Anderson and Canon Cheyne have gone so far as to state boldly that there is no satisfactory evidence for the historical figure of the Christ.

On the other hand there are those—the vast majority—who decline to yield up their conviction as to the living reality of the Christ, as incarnated in Palestine, and as a living power to-day, because that conviction is based upon their own spiritual experience, which is above and beyond the clash of the intellect. Many of these earnest and thoughtful people avoid the difficulties of the higher criticism by ignoring them.

Theosophy, however, has certain suggestions to make which are of great value in helping to harmonize these two opinions. The essence of these suggestions is embodied in the headings of this chapter and the next, *viz.*, “The Christ as God” and “The Christ as Man.”

Reference is made many times in the New Testament to the Christ as the power by which the worlds were made—the power of the Second Person of the Trinity, also referred to as the Word of God. The first chapter of Genesis recounts in detail the issuing forth of the Creative Word by which the light and the firmament and the dry land and all else was created.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him ; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (St. John i., 1-3).

Here we have described a power which is cosmic in character, a power of which our whole universe is the partial manifestation. Think what that means !

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Science has demonstrated that our earth is but an insignificant member of the family of planets which surround the sun, so far away that light takes over eight minutes to travel from him to us. Yet the Christ here spoken of is the builder and sustainer of all this and of the unseen worlds as well. We can no longer limit our religious conceptions within the narrow boundaries of the old geocentric systems of thought of a thousand years ago.

"Christ is the very incarnation of the unseen God, the first-born and head of all creation. For in Him was created all that is in Heaven and on earth, the seen and also the unseen—angelic beings whatever their power or rank. All has been created through Him and for Him. He was before all things, and all things depend upon Him for their existence, and He is also the head of the Church, His body" (Col. i., 15-18).*

Among the earliest Christian philosophers much thought was given to this aspect of the Christ as God, and the phrase used by the Apostle describing the Christ as the head of the Church was interpreted by them in an interesting manner. At the time St. Paul wrote there was practically no Christian Church. The Church to which the Apostle refers is the world of divine, creative ideas, the Pleroma, of which the Christ, as the formative power of the worlds, is the head. Everything exists in the divine thought, and only gradually is it expressed in these worlds of dense matter. That this was the thought in the mind of the Apostle is further shown by the following passage, also speaking of the Christ: "God's many-sided wisdom should now, through the Church, be made manifest to the angelic beings on high of every rank, in accordance with the purpose which He has in view all through the ages" (Ephesians iii., 10).

* These quotations from St. Paul are from a recent translation entitled "The Twentieth Century New Testament."

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The Christian Church can hardly claim that it has been the means of imparting to the angels the many-sided wisdom of God !

Or again, take the following passage: "He Who went down is the same as He Who went up—up beyond the highest Heaven ; for it is His aim to fill the whole universe with His presence " (Ephesians iv., 10-11).

Here again surely we have that power described, which, coming forth from God, has built the worlds, which is the force behind evolution, the spirit in the heart of man, and which is slowly returning unto God who gave it, gladdened and enriched by its triumphs here below.

The Dean of Ripon writes finely of the "presence of this power in every part of the creation " (*vide Natural Christianity*, by W. H. Fremantle, D.D., p. 22). He shows how Comte, Spencer, Huxley and Darwin all had to turn to this power behind evolution. It is emphasized by Athanasius, who speaks of Christ as the Word in every part of the creation.

The thought of the Apostle is fuller and more beautiful than this, however. He speaks about His aim "to fill the whole universe with His presence." In a phrase he pictures the stages in the great ladder of evolution when he says, "Animal life is not all of the same kind, but there is one kind for men, another for birds, another for beasts and another for fishes" (1 Cor. xv., 39); and later on, "We, however, have the very mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii., 16). This life of the Christ is present everywhere, but its degree of manifestation varies; it has been said that it sleeps in the mineral, it dreams in the vegetable, it wakes in the animal and it becomes self-conscious in the man. As it unfolds in man, as the Christ is formed in him this mind of the Christ awakens and he realizes the truth of the Apostle's splendid declaration: "We are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom.

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viii., 16-17); and again, "Nature is awaiting with eager expectation the appearing of God's sons" (Rom. viii 19).

"If Christ is in every man," says the Dean of Ripon, "then the incarnation is the highest point of a process which is, in its very essence, natural" (*Natural Christianity*, p. 27). The incarnation, as Theosophy explains it, is, in its broadest significance, the descent into matter of the cosmic Christ; this is the "Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii., 8). And the whole process of evolution consists in the return through all the kingdoms of nature of this wondrous life to its infinite source. This is the secret of the power in nature, the waiting for the manifestation of God's sons. To the Theosophist all life becomes sacred, and for every man there is his own way back to God. To the Theosophist the sounds of life, which separately are discords, become together a wondrous song of triumph, sung by the returning Son of God, which is humanity, on its way home. Viewing thus the world the Theosophist would make his life as little harmful as may be.

"Kill not for pity's sake and lest ye slay
The meanest thing upon its upward way"
was said by the Buddha many centuries ago. The true Theosophist is humanitarian at heart, in the best sense of that word; he realizes that he is part of a vaster consciousness which is revealing itself in the natural world about him, and in the impulses and the ideals, the hopes and the disappointments of the human society of which he is a unit.

Yet behind the struggle and the turmoil of it all are outstretched the everlasting arms of Him from Whom it all comes and to Whom it all returns, "Our Father, which art in Heaven."

This method of interpretation is, of course, entirely untouched by any questions of historical research and criticism. The documents stand or fall by the measure of inspiration and of illumina-

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tion which they bring. The aim of Theosophy, in common with the most progressive thought of the day in the domain of religion and of science, is to show how full a light is shed by the Christian scriptures upon all the problems of the day, including the science of the twentieth century.

Theosophy explains that in the symbol of the cross, found in every great religion, we have another embodiment of this same thought of the incarnation as the descent of the cosmic Christ into the world of matter and His subsequent resurrection.

In the "Acts of John," a fragment happily preserved from the third quarter of the second century, quoted by Clement of Alexandria, there is a very beautiful description of the crucifixion as viewed in its cosmic aspect. John is shown a vision of a cross of light, and about the foot of the cross a vast multitude, all having one appearance; while in the midst of the cross there is another multitude, not having one appearance, but many-faced; and above the cross is the Lord, but not having any shape, but only a voice of exceeding sweetness and as of God. And this voice is calling all things unto Him so that His race may be made one.

The multitude about the foot of the cross is all the lower life of nature, where individual self-consciousness and separation is not yet attained. In the midst of the cross, at the point of struggle, is seen the multitude not having one form, but differentiated; the point where the warring wills of men have arisen; while above the cross is the voice of the Lord calling back to himself the scattered members of His race. This is the true at-one-ment, in the broadest sense of that word; an atonement which will not be complete until every son of man is taken home into the life eternal.

"Behold mankind, bewildered, torn, distressed;
Thy little ones, Thy creatures, sore oppressed;

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Until all come to rest, Thou canst not rest.

Upon the universal Calvary slain,
Faint in our weakness, pierced by all our pain,
Thou diest, O LIFE ! that we may Life attain.

Yet Thou—in Them that know as They are
known—

Thou, God made man, in men to Manhood
grown,

Art ever rising to Thy Father's Throne."

CHAPTER V. THE CHRIST AS MAN.

We have now to consider the second aspect of our subject—the Christ as man. Let me again quote the Dean of Ripon's words, for they give a true starting point for the understanding of the Theosophical position: "If Christ is in every man then the incarnation is the highest point of a process which is, in its very essence, natural." I have already explained what is meant by the Christ in man; it is that seed of the divine in him, which is latent even in the least evolved and which is in course of evolution in each. The method of evolution is by re-birth, each incarnation serving to call forth some thrill of life from the latent Christ-life or to bring it vividly into manifestation when the time is ripe.

The Christ is the highest expression of this world-process, because in Him the Christ nature is perfectly manifested; He is one with the Father in Heaven consciously, whereas we are so unconsciously, for the most part. By virtue of this oneness the power of the Highest shines out in Him and the wisdom of God abides in Him.

How did He attain to this position? There are two views as to this. One says that He came down from Heaven, straight from the presence of God, and took up the tabernacle of the flesh, which had been specially prepared for Him in a miraculous manner.

If this be true does it not seem to remove Him from our humanity? To make of Him a Being apart from our race? Exquisite and wonderful truly, but *not* the first-fruits of them that slept, for He has never slept, *not* the highest point of a natural process in which we are parts, for we do not come

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straight and conscious from the presence of the Highest.

The other view, which Theosophy holds, is that Christ is truly the first-fruits and the culmination for our age, because He has climbed in the ages past up every step of the ladder of life; there is not a difficulty which He, in lives gone by, has not surmounted, not a sorrow which He has not endured; and He stands now as the culmination of our race, knowing every step of the way, and able, therefore, to sympathise perfectly and to share His mighty strength with every struggling human soul. In ages past He completed His human evolution, and because of His love for His fellow-men He took that vow which makes of Him a shepherd of men, while men have need of a shepherd to lead them home. "Touched with a feeling of our infirmities," yet "having become perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews v., 9).

The Catholic Faith is that Christ, as man, underwent a true and full human experience. What is a true and full human experience? Experience through many life-times—through man and woman, rich and poor, humble and mighty. If we accept reincarnation as true for ourselves and deny it of the Christ as man, we deny Him a true human experience, and implicitly deny Him a true human spirit.

Does this view imply that Christ is just a highly evolved man of one species with us? In His human nature surely He is one with humanity; perfect God expressed, as in this world God must and can only be expressed, in a manhood made perfect. In His divine nature also He is of one species with humanity. "For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one (*i.e.*, partakers of one divine nature), for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews ii., 11). Thus Christ is in every man. Nevertheless is it true to say that the Christ

belongs to a species that is above the human; He shows forth powers which are as much above the man as the man is above the animal or the animal above the plant. He has won the power to say: "I and the Father are one." When He speaks God speaks, for in Him the majesty of God is revealed in human form. As sunshine is related to the sun, so is the Christ related to the Deity. Yet is it the glory of humanity that these powers are latent or dawning in it, as the power to think is dawning in the brute, and that they will be developed in us as other powers have been developed in men in the past.

There is a path, taught in all the great religions, by which the Christ in man grows into His full stature, and it is part of the wonder of the Gospel story that, apart from and above all questions of authenticity of documents, this path is revealed in the story of the Christ. Its stages are as clearly marked and as constant as are the stages in human life, beginning with the cradle and ending with the grave, and all in whom the Christ-life is growing pass through them.

Only when the whole nature is purified and the mind is calmed, and when the perception of the worthlessness of the outer things has dawned, can the Christ be born. So we find the Virgin Mother, the silent Joseph standing by, and the scene of the nativity placed in a manger, or, as some say, in a cave—a place devoid of all luxury and show. Yet the gates of Heaven are opened, and angel hosts proclaim the new-born child, and the wise men, who have seen his star, which ever shines out over the birth-place of a Christ-child, come with precious gifts. The forces of the world, typified by Herod, rise up against Him, seeking to slay Him; they fail, because the Christ-child can never be slain. Christian legend is full of incidents which show the new powers unfolding; thus, violets are said to have suddenly bloomed when Mother and Child passed by and the sick were healed by the

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virtue in His swaddling clothes.

At the baptism there descends upon the young man of thirty, the Christ preparing to enter upon His ministry, a new power of the spirit, marking another stage in that Christ-development, which all must reach who follow in His steps. He is tempted to use His superhuman power for His own needs; to turn stones into bread, to accept the sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the earth. Possessing the power which would have made Him a monarch among men, he refuses to use it for Himself. Following the temptation, the scene changes with dramatic suddenness to the familiar home circle, with His mother and His neighbours at the marriage feast. Without word or sign of command from Him, and unknown to those present, the water with which He bade them fill the water pots is turned into wine (John ii., 7). So that He does for others, unknown and without their asking, or even their conscious need, that which He had refused to do for Himself when in sorest straits. Ever is it so with the Christ-disciple, who is constantly and silently changing and transmuting the common things of life, men's fears and sorrows and sins, into the wine of hope and comfort and aspiration.

After the baptism comes the Ministry, in which He goes about doing good and performing wondrous works, and He gives the teaching which leads to the path of life. The multitudes gather eagerly about Him; He speaks to them in luminous parables; the disciples, seeking stronger meat, come to Him and He takes them apart "into the house," and "privately to his own disciples He expounded all things" (Mark iv., 34). The traditions of these inner teachings are lacking in the accepted Christian canon.

A pause comes in His ministry, and He ascends "up into the mountain to pray" (Luke ix., 28) with three disciples. The mount is the image of that higher consciousness which is His, but which is too

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rare for His disciples, so that they fall asleep ; and there He is transformed, marking a further stage in the unfolding of the Christ-nature, and a voice is heard from the cloud, "This is my Son, my chosen ; hear ye Him" (Luke ix., 35). He has now grown so great and so holy, so much above the ordinary levels of humanity, that they begin to suspect Him, and the shadow of the coming passion and crucifixion are seen. Yet He sets His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, and in a Samaritan village they reject Him. At Jerusalem the multitudes receive Him with glad acclamation and spread their garments in the way, yet within a short time they revile Him as He passes on His path to Calvary.

In the agony of the crucifixion are shown the final struggles of the Christ-nature ; everything has gone, friends have denied and deserted Him, enemies are triumphant, the anguish is almost greater than He can bear, the crucifixion seems to mark the end of all. Yet in the very moment of defeat the victory comes, and swiftly following upon the tragedy of the cross we have the solemn grandeur and gladness of the resurrection morning ; hereafter the life, which has sacrificed everything the world holds dear, remains as an ever-flowing stream of blessing for humanity ; we remember this in the sanctified wine of the Eucharist and in the bread, of which He said, "This is my body."

Theosophy explains that the Christ as an individual passed through all these stages ages ago, but in the story of His life in Palestine they are repeated for our helping, as though to show again the path which leads to life eternal. Theosophy teaches that there are many who in the past have trodden and in the present are treading the path. Of those who have trodden it to its end some remain in the world and yet not of it, "Watchers and Holy Ones, pillars in the temple of God Who shall go out thence no more" (Rev. 3,

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12). They are Those Who have founded the great religions, and Who in the past have built the great civilizations of the world, which have endured for thousands of years. They form the Brotherhood of the Masters, of Which Theosophy speaks, Which guides the evolution of humanity "according to the word." Into Their ranks pass the saints and the heroes of the world, who are treading the way of the Cross and who will be Christs in lives to come when they have reached to the fulness of His stature. Among these Elder Brothers the Christ stands as a Teacher of Teachers, the Lord of all the religions of the world, the Rock of Ages upon which they all are built.

Such a belief cannot, of course, appeal to the reader who closes his mind to the idea of reincarnation; but to the Christian who sees that reincarnation is reasonable, scientific and in harmony with the spirit of Christianity, this conception of the Christ and of the path brings hope and comfort where otherwise there is despair. Nearly two thousand years have passed away since last He came, and millions of men and women have lived and died without ever hearing His name. Of those alive to-day who know His name how many are there who really follow Him? How many are there who are capable of following Him? Go down into the east end of London and place the ideal of the Christ-life before a drunken loafer, whose thoughts are centred on the nearest public house, and who aches to get there, and see whether he responds? Many Christians do not face questions like this; they are too hard. The Church has lost her hold over the masses, because, holding aloft the ideal of her glorious Head, she cannot suggest to the man in the street how he can ever get there, and so he shrugs his shoulders and passes it by. Let us uplift that ideal, but let us explain the steps which lead to it.

Let us recall the Master's own words: "The disciple is not above his Master, but everyone,

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when he is perfected, shall be as his Master" (St. Luke vi., 40), and then "Many are called but few chosen" (St. Matt. xx., 16).

How can the promise of the first passage be fulfilled even for the best of men without the conception of reincarnation and spiritual evolution? While, on the other hand, is it not a desolate prospect if, out of all the multitudes of His sheep, only few are chosen? Nay, the voice of the Master calling His race to Himself is ever in the world, and is infinitely patient, waiting for us through many lives if need be.

Theosophy would spread the rational view that every human being has many lives before him in which that which he lacks to-day will be developed. There are babes in the human family as well as grown men, and we do not expect the babe to exhibit the strength of maturity. For the babe, simple food; for the grown man, stronger meat.

Theosophy would fire the individual, the State and the Church with enthusiasm for the building up of a society in which full opportunity should be given to every individual to take the next step on his long journey. At present the State is trying to build single-handed; the Church is very largely a spectator, and the individual is, for the most part, a critic, a rebel or a mere partisan. From religion should come the wisdom to guide, from the State the power to execute, while from the individual should come the glad co-operation in the building.

How is this to be brought about? Signs are not wanting that a new leaven has been at work in society for many years past; a new breath has been stirring in religion, and from the lips of men, strangers to conventional religion, a remarkable phrase has been heard—the Christ of Democracy. Two thousand years ago the Christ came to the world and gave the impulse to society which has been its guiding spirit in the west ever since. From the small beginnings in Palestine the leaven

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spread which has coloured the thought of the world. In the pressing needs of our day, who is more fitted to come and shape the age afresh than He who shaped the age now closing? Said the Rev. R. J. Campbell (City Temple, Nov. 30, 1910): "Are we about to witness another advent? Do not the times seem ripe for it? Is not the falling away of the masses of the population from religious worship a sign of it? What is wanted is the impact of some new spiritual force, some tremendous dynamic from the supersensible world, not only to make civilization once more conscious of God, but to carry it upward to a new plane of spiritual achievement." He then refers to the spreading of the feeling that God will yet "send a Mighty One, who will bind all nations into one faith and brotherhood," and shows that this feeling exists in other religions also. He continues: "It is a repetition of what was taking place in hither Asia for a considerable time before the birth of Jesus. If God has created this expectation it is not unreasonable to assume that He will fulfil it. Certainly such a divine advent is badly needed, whether it be by means of one specially-inspired personality or by a new outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It could be both."

"Who, then, is this Christ that is to be, supposing that we are justified in looking for such a personal advent? Who but Jesus?"

Mrs. Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society, has affirmed her own conviction in no halting terms that the day is at hand when the Christ, the Supreme World-Teacher, will come again into the world of men, to give that needed impulse to our age.

Time alone can show the fulfilment of this hope, and, meanwhile, those who do not know have no right either to affirm or to deny; they can believe or disbelieve. Yet is this hope enshrined in the very sanctuary of Christendom; in witness of it, in the Church of England Prayer Book, the

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priest says aloud in the Prayer of Consecration at the Eucharist and the people re-echo it in their hearts "until His coming again."

His coming again is not for the "end of the world," as it is wrongly translated, but for the "consummation of the age," as it should be rendered ; not to condemn the evil to eternal punishment, for the evil is almost always due to ignorance and weakness, but to make all things new. Why should the world be suddenly ended and all that it contains vanish into thin air ? We do not see such sudden and violent disruption elsewhere in the universe, but everywhere we find evolution and ordered growth and sequence. If earthquakes occur and volcanoes flare up and spread destruction it is only by way of prelude to a fairer rebuilding. In this way Theosophy rationalizes the puzzling and, to many people, bizarre conception of the second advent.

But not only will the Christ come once again ; he will come many times in the ages of the future to lead His race homeward to God. Only those are of His race in whom the Christ nature shines out ; it matters not by what name the world calls them, be they Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Mohammedan, or followers of the religion of human service, if the Christ spirit is in them, they belong to Him and in the days to come they will be gathered into His fold when "they shall become one flock, one shepherd."

CHAPTER VI.

PRAYER, FORGIVENESS, SACRAMENT.

Do Theosophists believe in prayer? Most assuredly they do.

But prayers are of many kinds and it is desirable to distinguish between them. There is the prayer which is solely concerned with the gaining of some material benefit—money or health or position. It is sometimes charged against this type of prayer that it assumes, unconsciously of course, that the Deity is in danger of overlooking the needs of some one of His creatures and requires to be reminded of them. When the prayer is purely selfish this objection is valid. On the other hand, there is a very right and natural instinct implanted in us, to express in some measure the gratitude which we owe to Him, in Whom we live and move and have our being. “Give us this day our daily bread” is not so much a personal petition for physical or spiritual food as an expression of this deep instinct, rising from humanity to our Father.

Many instances are on record in which prayers for personal benefit have, apparently, been answered; the petition of a mother for the life of a dearly-loved child has been heard; the situation which has averted destitution has been providentially found; charitable institutions, face to face with empty coffers, have been rescued by the answered pleadings of those who prayed for them. On the other hand, instances are equally numerous of prayers of this kind to which the heavens have been as brass; starvation, suffering, despair and death have seized their victim in spite of the most passionate entreaty. Is it possible to find any law in operation to explain such phenomena?

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We must realise that the power behind such personal appeals is really that of human will and desire in face of a great need, and re-inforced by additional emotional elements drawn from faith. The human will is in itself a dynamic power of a very high order, when it is controlled and concentrated ; should circumstances arise in which it is thus focussed, then, by its action upon other wills, it strives unconsciously to gain what it desires, and often succeeds in doing so. The will thus sent out into the invisible worlds, which lie about us, is a measurable force and it may influence directly the mind of someone who is in a position to alleviate the suffering, or the prayer may attract the attention of an angel, one of the " Watchers and Holy Ones " whom the King saw " come down from heaven " (Daniel, Chap. IV.), and so be answered. That it is not answered in every instance is due to the fact that, in some cases, the Larger Will to which all wills are subject, has decreed that the cup shall not pass away. It was said of old " Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap," and if an individual has sown in his past, either in this life or some former one, the seed which yields suffering as its bitter fruit, then no prayer of his, or of anyone else, can avail to avert that suffering, although such prayers may bring the courage and the peace of mind which makes it possible to bear all things.

Another type of prayer is not concerned with material benefits, but seeks for spiritual strength to overcome difficulties and temptations, power to fulfil arduous duties, inspiration to plan and to achieve noble works. This is the prayer which the sincere Theosophist, in common with the earnest Christian or Hindu or Buddhist, offers every day of his life. He recognises that man is three-fold in his nature, consisting of body, soul and spirit, and he regards prayer as the means by which the soul may rise above the valleys of everyday existence, with its limited horizon, and see life

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from the higher standpoint of the spirit; the atmosphere of the spirit is all too rare for many of us, as yet, to breathe for long, nevertheless the power to rise for a time into that serene level is our most precious possession, and it is a power which grows with exercise.

The response which this type of prayer evokes is two-fold. "What a man thinks on, that he becomes," is one of the first laws of thought, and so a man who deliberately sets aside a portion of each day for this exercise of raising himself up towards the good, the true and the beautiful, is thereby attuning himself to these, and, of a surety, they will presently show themselves forth in him. His daily meditation directed towards this end will brace his nature, and presently he will gain the power of opening the door of the heart. This brings him the first response to his prayer; and when he can so open the door he will find the second; for he will discover that in the Spiritual World his prayer was heard and answered directly it formed itself in his heart. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in"—(John I., 11.)

Prayer or meditation of this kind merges by imperceptible stages into the prayer of contemplation wherein the soul is unified with the spirit, "caught up into the third heaven" and hears and sees things unutterable; this is the mystic state of union, to which testimony has been borne in all ages and faiths, wherein all elements of petition are left behind, where faith is lost in the ample sunshine of certainty and hope and belief merge into knowledge. The mystic *knows* of the eternal verities. This was described by Plato as "the ardent turning of the Soul towards the Divine; not to ask any particular good (as is the common meaning of prayer) but for good itself, for the universal supreme good."

It is only possible to refer in the briefest terms to other forms of prayer. Theosophy explains

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that thoughts are forces for good or ill ; kindly thoughts directed to help are useful and perform their appointed task, but their power is greatly intensified if the sender sanctifies them with the prayer that the Father of all may add His blessing. The collective prayers offered up in religious orders, and the perpetual adoration maintained before many altars all play their part in providing channels through which the life of the spirit may flow out into the nation. The men of prayer and meditation are the very salt of the earth and they are to be found not only in church and cloister but in every walk in life and in every faith.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

Do Theosophists believe in the Forgiveness of Sins ?

No, if by forgiveness is meant arbitrary "letting-off" ; yes, most certainly, if by it is meant deliverance from spiritual darkness and disharmony and realized "rightness" with God.

We perceive that we are living in a world which is guided by law, and Christians and Theosophists recognise that this law which guides is an expression of the Divine Will. It is not irreverent in the least so to regard every natural law. We recognise freely that natural law is invariable and we guide our lives accordingly. We make no complaint, if we have broken a limb yesterday, on finding it painful and useless to-day. But we are apt to lose sight of the fact that Divine law operates inviolably in the mental and moral worlds, and takes account as justly of motive, thought and emotion as of actual physical doings. If a man has persisted for years in a course of action which has brought suffering and despair to others, he has set in motion forces which must re-act upon himself ; he has sown evil seed and must reap its evil harvest. If we live in a world of law and not of caprice, nothing else is possible. It is as impossible to suppose that the whole effect of a long-

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continued course of evil-doing can be suddenly wiped out as it is to suppose that the wickedness of any finite life-time, no matter how persistent, can merit the torments of a never-ending hell.

Is there any punishment for sin? If punishment be taken as meaning some arbitrary penalty, inflicted in anger and not sequentially related to the sin, then there can be no punishment in a world of law. To suppose, for instance, that a man could burn in hell because he had not believed in some particular dogma, is to do violence to our sense of order and justice. There is no connection between the two things. Such a conception of arbitrary punishment necessitates an arbitrary forgiveness to balance matters and make life endurable. On the other hand, it is reasonable and in harmony with our sense of law to suppose that a man, who has so little used his sympathy and imagination as to allow his work-people to go half-starved, while he has lived in luxury, will be given the opportunity of learning from experience what poverty means, and of making good the injury he has done. It would be unjust to the man did he not have the opportunity of righting the wrong done. The good law is educative, and the whole false notion of punishment should be swept utterly away. If forgiveness means the interfering with the due operation of law then there is no forgiveness. We do not ask the law of gravity for forgiveness if we infringe it, why then should we seek forgiveness if we have infringed mental and moral laws? The Master said that for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"—(Matt. XII., 36.)

To leave the matter thus, however, would be to state half only of the Theosophical view. The sense of forgiveness and of consequent rightness with God is a fact of tremendous significance in Christian experience and Theosophy recognises it to the full. While the Master used the words quoted above He also said "Son, be of good cheer,

thy sins be forgiven thee"—(Matt. ix., 2) and again "Her sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much"—(Luke vii., 47). Can these things be reconciled ?

As has already been pointed out (Chap. II.) man's nature is three-fold—body, soul and spirit. The essence of sin lies in the fact that the will and desire of the lower nature are set in opposition to the will of the spirit, which is in harmony with the Divine Will. This opposition may quite suddenly be removed. Some appeal from the outside, through a spiritual teacher or someone dearly-loved, or a subtle change in the very soul itself, brought about sometimes by sheer satiety, may provoke an up-willing of power from the spirit in him, and the human will which has been persistently directed away from God, may turn round and be transformed almost in a moment. Such things happen. Very naturally has the word "forgiveness" been used to describe the sense of "rightness" which comes with such an experience. Yet is the word ill-chosen, for the Divine sunshine has been there all the time shining steadily upon the sinner, yet unfelt until he chooses to turn his face in rapture towards it.

While this experience is indeed a fact of profound significance, we must not forget that the effects of the previous sins are not thereby removed. The drunkard may still have to battle fiercely with temptation ; he must still suffer from a body whose nerves have been shattered from excess and a digestion which has been impaired. Nevertheless the man is free and forgiven, because he has rightly resolved ; he is now working with the Divine Will and not against it and so, as is said in an eastern scripture "he must be accounted righteous."

A further point is this. Where the re-action of suffering, following upon transgression of law, is almost worn out, the chain may sometimes be broken by some human agent ; a benefactor may

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suddenly arise and relieve the poverty, or a new physician be found who can heal, or someone with higher knowledge, seeing the chain of cause and effect, may declare it ended. Thus we find the glad words of liberation "Take up thy bed and walk," spoken by the Master, when the will of the sinner has been redeemed and also the outer reaction of the evil has been done away.

Where this is impossible, when the debt to the good law has not been discharged and the burden thereof must still be borne, because of the lessons to be learnt, then it is possible for the Greater One to share His strength with the weaker and so without any violation of law, to make the burden lighter. This, as Theosophy explains it, is part of the world-work of the Christ. He shares with all striving human souls His infinite strength, He takes upon Himself a portion of every burden, so that no one in His world sorrows alone; He does this, not in appeasement of an angry Deity, but as His glorious work of leading humanity homeward to the Father.

THE SACRAMENTS.

What view does Theosophy take of the Sacraments of the Church? As has already been mentioned, testimony has been borne to the influence of Theosophy by some Christians who have gained through it a stronger conviction of the power and reality of the Sacraments.

It is only possible to refer in the briefest terms to this great subject in a small book like this.*

The Spiritual Life is pressing upon us on every side as equally and steadily as the atmosphere; we are living in the Spirit, are bathed by it, and yet for the most part we are unconscious of its pressure, because we have so few points of contact with it; we are living with our backs to it, instead of our faces and so its influence sweeps by us and is hardly felt.

*The reader is referred to *Esoteric Christianity* by Annie Besant for a full treatment.

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A Sacrament is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same"—(Catechism of Church of England). This takes us to the very heart of the Theosophical conception of a Sacrament. It is a means designed by one with knowledge of Spiritual Life, whereby the power of the Spirit may reach more freely than would otherwise be possible, those who partake of the Sacrament, and who, without this means of grace, would not be able to rise to the level of the Spiritual power so liberated. A somewhat commonplace illustration may make this point clearer. Some miles away from where I write there are coils of wire wherein is stored up a great electrical power. Above my head there is a small piece of wire, quite ordinary in composition and similar to other wire, yet under certain conditions, which I have it in my power to provoke, the wire above my head will become alive with the power which quivers in the distant batteries, and will glow out in brilliant light. In a similar way this same power is taken to dozens of other homes. The natural world may sometimes aid our feeble endeavours to comprehend the supernatural. The man of spiritual power may form a reservoir of that power and create channels through which it may flow down to the natural, and may give the directions by which the power may be invoked. Then we have the essentials of a Sacrament.

Theosophical investigation confirms the fact, to which the experience of millions of devout communicants bears witness, that when the priest makes the sign and speaks the consecrating words in the Eucharist, the bread and wine become the channels through which a wave of Spiritual Life flows out to all around and specially to those who partake of the Sacrament. Thus the consecrated elements may be truly called the Body and Blood of Christ, since they become a means of contact

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with His divine manhood, very much as the bodies of our friends are a means by which we come into relation with the living spiritual persons who wear them. The Sacrament is much more than a simple act of remembrance; it is the veritable channel through which the Spiritual Life may be contacted. There are some who prefer to reach up to the Spiritual through private prayer and meditation; surely they find it. But there are large numbers who are differently constituted and for them the Sacraments are means splendidly conceived, whereby the life of the Spirit is brought to them. The Christian Faith is rich indeed in having seven great Sacraments, designed to bless and protect from cradle to grave, beginning with Baptism and terminating with Extreme Unction. Theosophy, by spreading a fuller understanding of them, would aid the Christian Church in winning larger numbers of its people to partake regularly of the Sacraments; it cannot be denied that at present the proportion of those in our population who do regularly participate is painfully small.

It may not be out of place to remark that the Sacramental principle is by no means unknown in other religions, and that the use of consecrated bread and wine is of very great antiquity. The Ancient Persians offered bread and wine to Mithra, and a similar rite was in use among the Ancient Egyptians and among the Mexicans, Peruvians and Druids.

All of which serves to lend force to the explanation already given (Chap. v.) of the Christ as the World-Teacher and Lord of all the Religions and the interpretation put upon His words "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold"—(John II., 18.)

CONCLUSION.

I conclude by inverting my title and affirming that Theosophy is one of the forces which is aiding the Christianity of to-day to shape itself anew and, under the guidance of its Glorious Head, to take its rightful place as the leader of thought, science, art and philosophy. It is frequently said that official Christianity is out of touch with the masses of the people and does not influence the best thinkers of the country as it should. What is wanted is a conception of life and of evolution which is rational and coherent and which takes account of the souls of men as well as of their bodies. This conception Theosophy undoubtedly affords and I am convinced that it is identical with the best and truest Christianity. The reader must judge for himself whether that conviction is well-founded or not.

Let him remember, however, that true Christianity is a living, growing thing and not a formal set of doctrines. Said St Augustine (*City of God* x., 14): "What is nowadays called the 'Christian Religion' was in existence among the ancients, and has never ceased to exist from the very origin of the human race until, Christ Himself having appeared, they began to designate as 'Christian' the true religion which had hitherto been in existence." In the other faiths of the world the Christ has also expressed the One Truth which is behind all religions, and the world is the richer for these many varieties of the truth. Bernard Lucas, a missionary of twenty-five years

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standing in India, writes (*Our Task in India*, p. 32): "The Christianity which is pure and complete will not arrive until each religious type has contributed its divinely-appointed quota to the whole."

We have seen in our time many of the barriers thrown down which have divided nations one from another; barriers of language, distance and time every year are of less importance, and the world is more consciously one than ever before. May it not be that the Mind of the Master-BUILDER of Religion is shaping anew a faith to be the inspiration of the coming age, into which shall be gathered the best from all that has gone before, and that in His good time He shall declare it?

APPENDIX.

CHRISTIANITY AND THEOSOPHY.

A very interesting exchange of views recently took place between a clergyman (Sacerdos Indig-

What Christianity teaches
according to Sacerdos
Indignus.

1.—That man, though bearing God's image, is altogether a created being, his nature being essentially distinct from the Nature of God.

2.—That "it is appointed unto men to die once" and once only.

3.—That, after death, every man will one day rise again.

4.—That, after his resurrection, each man will pass to a final State of Bliss or Woe.

What Sacerdos Indignus
supposes Theosophists to
teach.

1.—That man's spirit is uncreated and eternal and is, indeed, an actual part of God; and that man himself is, therefore, "divine."

2.—That it is appointed unto men to die certainly more than once and probably a good many times.

3.—That no man will ever rise again, but that every man will be re-incarnated and that probably many times.

4.—That, after his various re-incarnations, each man will be re-absorbed into the Divine Essence.

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nus), opposed to Theosophy, and a Christian Theosophist. It was published as a pamphlet, and part of it is now reprinted here with permission.

What Theosophy teaches according to the Christian Theosophist.

1. All the great mystics and many passages in our Scriptures support what is here stated to be the teaching of Theosophy. It is quite fairly given, except that "part of God" is apt to mislead. A better expression would be that God is the great SELF dwelling in the hearts of us, the lesser selves. Dr. Pusey says, very truly, that to know more of ourselves is to know more of God. St. Catherine, of Genoa, says: "My 'me' is God, nor do I know my self-hood save in Him." We are "partakers of the Divine Nature."

2. That in the Father's House are many "halting-places" (correct rendering of St. John xiv., 2), and that the spirit which is the permanent man, progresses from strength to strength, what we call a "lifetime" being one day in a longer life, one of many incarnations in this or similar worlds.

The death which has to be undergone once and once for all is not the death of a body, but the final and complete death to self, which makes man more than man and one with God.

3. That the true meaning of Resurrection is not the gathering together of an old body—as unthinkable as it would be undesirable—but the gaining by the advancing spirit of complete mastery over soul (mind and emotions) and body; so that the lower man becomes a perfect expression of the higher, as the higher becomes a perfect reflection of the Divine Self rooted and resting in God. This "Resurrection" follows upon the "death" above defined.

4. That those who have "overcome," that is, "attained to the Resurrection" from a condition subject to birth, death, ignorance, sin, etc., being made "pillars in the Temple of God shall go out thence no more" (Rev. iii., 12). In other words, when the man has learned all the lessons which this school of life has to teach, conquered utterly his lower nature, and paid and received all his debts, he need

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What Christianity teaches
according to Sacerdos
Indignus.

What Sacerdos Indignus
supposes Theosophists to
teach.

5.—That the Divine
Essence is Tri-personal
(Father, Son and Holy
Ghost).

5.—That the Divine
Essence, if personal at all,
is only uni-personal.

6.—That Christ is God
the Son made Man—Very
God incarnate in our nature
—and the World's One
Divine Teacher.

6.—That the Divinity
of Christ differs, not in kind,
but in degree only, from the
“divinity” of His “fellow-
men” and that, as a Teacher,
He was possibly inferior to
Teachers “Diviner” than
Himself, for instance,
Buddha.

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What Theosophy teaches according to the Christian Theosophist.

return to the school no longer. Plainly, the average man, and even the best sort of men, are too small, too unfinished, for a final and eternal state of bliss.* States of everlasting woe are only believed in by those who have apparently forgotten that this universe is the expression of perfect love and the plan of eternal wisdom. The words given "eternal punishment" (St. Matt. xxv., 46) signify no such teaching. Correctly rendered, they are "the pruning of the ages," the "cutting back" of a spirit, the setting it in lowlier conditions, that it may grow better and grow aright.

5. Theosophists do not deny the Trinity. Almost all great religions teach the threefold nature of the Divine Life, as manifested in the universe. Neither, by the way, are Theosophists Pantheists, as some have mistakenly supposed. They believe in the Divine Transcendence as well as in the Divine Immanence.

They quote the verse from the Bhagavad Gita: "With a fragment of Myself I pervade this entire universe, *and I remain.*"

Also the verse (Psalm cii., 27): "As a vesture shalt Thou change them (the heavens and earth), and they shall be changed; but *Thou art the same*, and Thy years shall not fail."

6. That the Eternal Christ, the Everlasting Word, is incarnate, not in one man only, but in the whole of our universe, as the life and sustainer of all its forms. That the Historic Christ, "having been made perfect," having "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews v., 8), has taken his manhood into God, and for ever knows Himself, as we do not yet know ourselves, one with the Father. He is "perfect God" expressed in perfect manhood, and "perfect Man" as man is meant to be.

Plainly, there cannot be "two Gods, one incarnate in Christ, one immanent in us," since God is One and Life One.

Theosophists do *not* lower the actual greatness of the Christ, but they do make clearer, as all the Christian mystics have done, the *potential* greatness of us, His younger

* Briefly, it may be said that the whole of Christ's teachings about "the narrow way," "the strait gate," the "many called and few chosen," are unintelligible, or intelligible only on Calvinist lines, apart from some theory of Reincarnation.

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What Christianity teaches
according to Sacerdos
Indignus.

What Sacerdos Indignus
supposes Theosophists to
teach.

7.—That Christ's Death
was the Great Atoning
Sacrifice for Sin.

7.—That Christ's death
was, at best, a mere martyr-
dom and that, since "sin"
(in the Christian sense) has
no existence, no sort of
Atonement is needed for it.

8.—That Christ rose
from the dead and ascended
to Heaven and there reigns
and thence will return one
day to judge the World.

8.—That Christ's body
mouldered in the grave; that
He never did and never will
rise again; but that, like all
other human beings, He will
certainly be re-incarnated
sooner or later.

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brethren; and, by stating the law of Reincarnation they make clearer also, as not all Christian mystics have done, the method and the stages by which man climbs to his inheritance and home in God. Most Theosophists regard the Historic Christ, Him Who last appeared in Palestine, and Who (as many hope) will shortly appear again in our modern world, as being now the world's Supreme Divine Teacher.

7. That "salvation" is not something done *outside* us and for us: but a change, a spiritualization of the whole nature, accomplished *in* us. They would say with the German mystic poet,

"The Cross on Golgotha thou lookest to in vain,
Unless within thyself it be set up again."

While Christ, the Divine Man, and those others, the "Watchers and Holy Ones" (Dan. iv., 17), "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews xii., 23), Who work with Him, and Whom Theosophists call Masters, can and do help us in ways innumerable, and with power and self-sacrificing love beyond our imagining, They cannot save us in spite of ourselves. We must "work out our own salvation," by surrendering our lower selves to God, the Divine Self, "who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

They can, and do, by teaching, example, and the out-pouring of spiritual influences, help us on the upward path. The at-one-ment by Christ's Blood is not an appeasing of Divine anger by physical torments. His "Blood" is His Life and His life is Infinite Compassion. Pouring out this Compassion over all the world, He lives unceasingly to at-one man with God.

8. That Christ indeed rose from the condition of men subject to death, weakness, etc., and (while still retaining a body like ours, though, as ours are not yet, a perfect and glorious expression of the spirit made perfect within) ascended in full consciousness into the highest heaven and "far above all heavens."

"For the death that He died, He died unto sin (*i.e.*, limited human selfhood) once for all: but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Romans vi., 10, R.V.)

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What Christianity teaches
according to Sacerdos
Indignus.

What Sacerdos Indignus
supposes Theosophists to
teach.

9.—That we are saved
by the application to us by
the Holy Ghost of Christ's
Merits and Risen Life.

9.—That we are "saved"
only by undergoing a prob-
ably prolonged series of re-
incarnations.

10.—That Christianity
is the one only True and
Divinely revealed Religion.

10.—That Christianity
is only one out of many kin-
dred Religions and is neither
more nor less "divine," in
origin and essence, than
they.

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He is "one Christ, one not by conversion of the God-head into flesh" (the descent of an external Deity into a human form) "but by taking of the manhood into God."

Many Theosophists (and others) believe that He will indeed come again, and before long, into this outer world; that He will come to call men and women of goodwill from all religions into one great brotherhood for the uplifting and uniting of the world. That His Coming will mark "the consummation of the age" (the true rendering of the phrase translated "end of the world."). That it will indeed be a judgment, calling out those ripe for unity from among those still fettered by religious, race or class prejudices. A judgment, not a final condemnation; for these, too, in another life, if not now, will learn better.

9. That men are saved, in whatever outer religion they live, by the awakening of the Christ within. This "Christ in you, the hope of glory," St. Paul, in Colossians i., 27, and in many other places, shows to be the true meaning of the Gospel and principle of salvation; this and not belief in any person or set of historic facts.

That since "salvation" means nothing less than growing up spiritually, coming "unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ," it is not done in a day or in a lifetime.

(See answer to point 8).

10. It is true that Christianity is the only true and divinely revealed religion, *if* by Christianity is meant the Catholic (*i.e.*, universal) religion, the one Wisdom. St. Augustine says (City of God x., 14): "What is nowadays called the 'Christian Religion' was in existence among the ancients, and has never ceased to exist from the very origin of the human race until, Christ himself having appeared, they began to designate as 'Christian' the true religion which had hitherto been in existence."

If Theosophists look for the supersession of Christianity *in its present form*, it is by the coming again of the Christ Himself and by His triumph. He will come, as many of them believe, to call into "one flock" His sheep from those many "folds" which are called religions.

IS THEOSOPHY ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

What Christianity teaches
according to Sacerdos
Indignus.

What Sacerdos Indignus
supposes Theosophists to
teach.

11. That to reject
Christianity in whole or in
part, is to reject God and to
forfeit salvation.

11. That to reject such
tenets of Christianity as may
prove, on examination, to be
inconsistent with the tenets
of Theosophy is a plain
duty.

APPENDIX.

What Theosophy teaches according to the Christian Theosophist.

And if Christianity be the true religion of Christ, His triumph and recognition as the One Saviour-Shepherd of mankind will be the triumph of Christianity. Can a better be imagined or desired?

11. This has been already answered. But it may be said here that to deny the Christ within, our Higher Self, and to live in the lower, manifested as animalism, covetousness, selfish ambitions, religious intolerance, etc., is indeed to blind oneself to the light of God, and to remain, so long as one continues in this state, outside salvation. For the way to salvation is to live in the highest, to seek to be like Christ, to forget self, and to love and serve one's brethren: and that is the Christianity true Theosophists teach and try to live.

Christ's word remains:

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven."

Thousands have done, are doing and will do that will, without ever even having heard of "Christianity" in the theological sense of the term. Are they or are they not being saved? Christ's answer seems plain on this point.

After all, Christians differ pretty widely as to what are the tenets of Christianity. Many tenets once claiming to be Christian have been rejected of late by growing enlightenment, quite apart from the writings of the Theosophical movement. And Theosophy is not a set of dogmas so much as an attitude of loyalty to Truth. Theosophists think it better to be honestly mistaken than to hold a right opinion in a wrong way, *i.e.*, under compulsion or fear. In other words, error is less harmful than superstition.

For the attitude of Theosophical writers and speakers is not "I believe so-and-so, and you have got to believe it too," but always rather "I know, or at least am entirely convinced, that so-and-so is true. If it convinces you, accept it; if you cannot yet see it to be true at least consider it well. Do not accept without conviction, nor reject without examination." It is not necessary to point out which attitude is the more attractive to reasonable men and women, or more characteristic of the true spiritual teacher. The day, or rather the dark night, of mere dogmatism is

IS THEOSOPHY ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

ending. The Truth shall "make us free," but, to do so, it must be freely accepted, not imposed by authority.

The foregoing summarizes what many Theosophists do in fact believe and would accept as being, in outline, a true statement of their position. Indeed (as time will show) the issue cannot be between true Christianity and true Theosophy—for they must be one, since Truth is One—but is between two views as to what Christianity means. Let the reader compare column 1 with column 3, and judge which presentation of life is the saner, more hopeful, more reasonable and inspiring. Whichever is, that must be at least nearer to true Christianity.

One final word, a gentle but definite protest against the threat with which Sacerdos Indignus sees fit to conclude his pamphlet.*

Surely threats suggest a weak case. And surely they are not justified. We cannot know all, and must, in our present imperfect state, make many mistakes. But we have *nothing to be afraid of* if we seek honestly for Light.

God is the Eternal Wisdom and the Infinite Love, not a heresy-hunter.

True, "right knowledge" is useful, and, at a certain stage, necessary, and to all it cannot but be helpful: but it can only be attained by following one's best convictions, making one's mistakes, and learning one's lessons.

If we are doing our best and following the truth we see, however imperfect, at all costs, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to fear in all the universe.

* The threat referred to appeared on the last page of the pamphlet by Sacerdos Indignus, and was a complete misapplication of certain verses from the New Testament (Hebrews x. 28, 29).

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

OBJECTS.

- 1.—To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
 - 2.—To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
 - 3.—To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.
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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the above objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good will, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow, but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom, and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

THEOSOPHY is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gate-way of a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself, and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and Theosophists endeavour to live them. Every one willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true Theosophist.

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